Inside Look

McCALEB INITIATIVE FOR PEACE

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HINDU-MUSLIM COMMUNALISM

PEACE OR CONFLICT

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Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Hindu and Muslim girls receive education together at a government-run school outside Hyderabad.

Student gains life knowledge

Allison Rosewicz
Editor Emeritus

It is amazing how much more one can learn from experience rather than books or lectures.

Since returning from my eight-week study in India during the summer of 2003, I have been telling everyone that I learned more in my short time there than I could ever learn in an entire semester here.

I am not demeaning the education here at Missouri Southern; I am simply agreeing with the poster that hangs in the third floor of Webster Hall: Culture shock is a good thing. I have learned so much from it.

First of all, I have to thank those who gave me the opportunity to experience this culture shock.

Dr. Karl J. Schmidt was my adviser for this project. He heightened my interest in India in 2001 when he first invited me to travel to India with him though the University. Unfortunately, that trip was canceled due to unforeseen incidents (the possibility of nuclear war between India and Pakistan). But last year, as soon as another opportunity came up, Schmidt immediately told me about the Summer in India Program. So of course, I jumped at the chance.

And while I was in India this summer, I was able to complete this project through the McCaleb Initiative for Peace. So of course, I must thank the late Kenneth McCaleb for creating it and Margaret McCaleb for continuing its legacy. I would also like to thank Dr. Chad Stebbins and the Institute of International Studies for helping me out with the cost of this trip.

But this entire project would not have been possible without the assistance of the great people of India, who showed me how wonderfully different the world can be. I must extend an extra-special thanks to Dr. Manjari Katju, who is one of the most open-minded and intelligent people I have ever had the privilege to meet. She taught me more than can be imagined in my six weeks of knowing her.

I only hope those who read this can gain at least a bit of the knowledge I did while working on this project.

With that said, I must first provide a brief history of Hindu-Muslim conflict in India before the reader can begin to understand what has happened in Hyderabad.

The root of this conflict lies in the misinterpretation of what Hinduism itself actually is. The term "Hindu" was originally a Muslim word. Muslims, most of whom were Arab traders from Persia, came to India's west coast in the ninth and 10th centuries.

These traders had to cross the Sindhu (now called Indus) River. The Muslims could not pronounce "Sindhu," so they said "Hindu." The Muslims, therefore, called all of India's inhabitants south of the river "Hindus."

Most of these inhabitants belonged to different tribes, groups and sects that often practiced different rituals. These practices were eventually grouped under one religious term, "Hinduism."

Another historical factor that has contributed to communal conflict is the destruction of the Rama temple at Ayodhya.

In the 16th century, a Muslim mosque called the Babri-Masjid was built in dedication to Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India. Hindu activists claimed, and today continue to insist, this mosque was built on the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama. This argument led many to believe Muslims destroyed Rama's temple in order to erect the Babri-Masjid.

This argument has spanned centuries, and in December 1992, 200,000 members of the Hindu right destroyed the Babri-Masjid. Parties of the Hindu right, namely the Bharatiya Janata Party, continue to use this issue as part of their platform for Hindu nationalism. The Hindu right says a temple for Rama should be built in place of the Babri-Masjid. It has funded excavations to prove this was Rama's birthplace, but so far, none of these efforts have provided such proof. This case is currently under scrutiny in court.

Perhaps the most well-known cause of

TURN TO **INTRODUCTION**, PAGE 11B

Children, both Hindu and Muslim, take a break from their studies during recess before lunch. The Indian government runs this school just outside Hyderabad, persuading many parents to send their children here so they can eat a meal.

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Instructor offers expertise on conflict

I first went to India in August 1992 to do dissertation research for a Ph.D. in history. I lived in India for four months, traveled the length and breadth of the place, lost 30 pounds and proposed to my wife in front of the Taj Mahal. Near the end of my stay, I also witnessed my first communal riots: the 3,000 killings that followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid (a Muslim mosque) in Ayodhya by right-wing Hindus upset by what they saw as a Muslim injustice dating back several centuries. Though saddened and disturbed by what I saw that last week I was in India, I have come to realize since then that ironically it is also part of what fascinates me about the country: its complexity. India occasionally erupts into violence, sparked most often by communal violence between Hindus and Muslim extremists. The "otherness" with which each group perceives its counterpart has existed for many centuries but, for the most part, peaceful coexistence in the rule of the day. Unfortunately, on those rare occasions when Hindus and Muslims kill each other, it serves to reinforce the stereotypes Americans have about India.

Dr. Karl Schmidt
Director of International Studies
SDSU

Despite its growing importance in the world, India is a country few Americans know much about. As former Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl F. Inderfurth once aptly pointed out in a speech to the Foreign Policy Association, "though many Americans can easily identify India on the map and more precisely know that the Subcontinent exists as a geographic entity, they have trouble grasping or remembering that it truly is its own region, separate and distinct from East, Central, or Southwest Asia, much less why it matters."

In a speech in New Delhi, former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott pointed out that the United States "recognizes the importance of India — economically, strategically and politically — to the future of a stable and prosperous Asia and indeed to a stable and prosperous world." The U.S. Commerce Department has listed India as one of the world's 10 "Big Emerging Markets" along with China and Mexico, among others. The department predicts that the BEMs will be the fastest-growing markets through the turn of the century and that they hold far more promise for large gains in U.S. exports than either Europe or Japan.

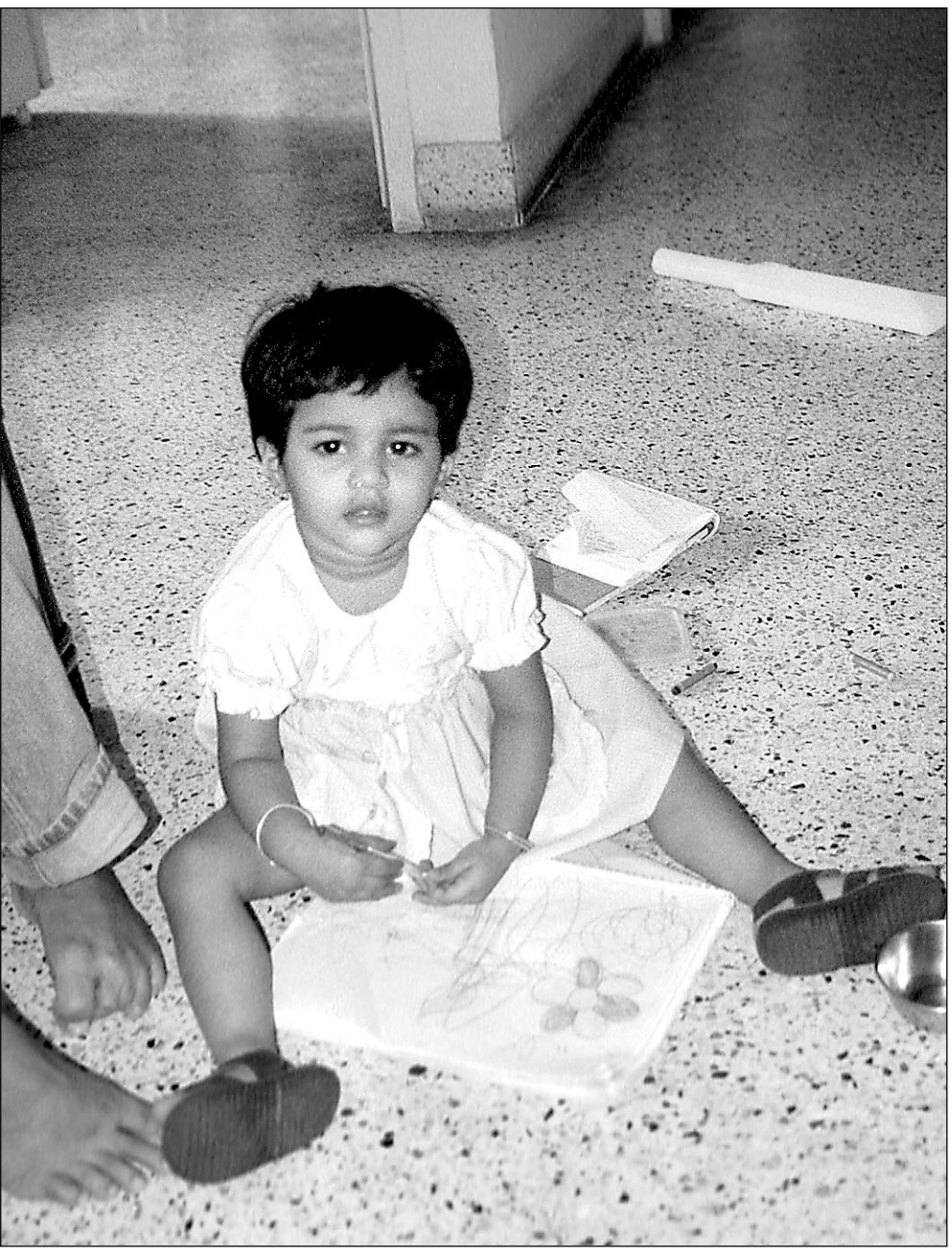
In terms of both imports and exports, the United States is already India's biggest trading partner. This relationship will strengthen in the future.

In addition to its growing economy, India has a rich and ancient culture and is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations. It is the birthplace of Hinduism and Buddhism, and is home to millions of followers of other important faiths, including Islam. India also has the world's fourth largest army and has recently joined the nuclear club. Another reason India should be of interest to all Americans is the fact that Indian-Americans make up a significant ethnic group within the United States. The United States ranks fifth among countries in the world with the largest Indian populations. While not large as a proportion of the total U.S. population, Indian-Americans comprise more than half a million individuals and, as a group, are well-educated and relatively prosperous by U.S. standards.

Since winning its independence from Britain in 1947, India has developed its democratic institutions and has been a stable democracy. Indeed, it is the world's most populous democracy. India's democratic leaders have sought to address the many problems inherent in governing a country with a large and growing population, poverty, high illiteracy and hostile neighbors. India's population at independence stood at 350 million. Today, India's population numbers more than one billion, and is expected to surpass China as the most populous country by 2025. Attempts to cure poverty included a long-term experience with socialism and state-run industries until 1991, when the government began a process of liberalizing the Indian economy. After a weak start earlier in the decade, India's economy today is strong, with an annual real growth rate in GDP of 4.3 percent, higher than that of the United States even before the recent eco-

Turn to **INSTRUCTOR**, Page 11B

Inter-religious couple marries despite cultural beliefs



Above: Sara Aparajita's name reflects her inter-religious heritage. Her parents consider her "a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity."

Right: Despite social stigmas against inter-religious union, Aniket Alam, a Muslim, and Manjari Katju, a Hindu, married in 1992.

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

BY ALLISON ROSEWICZ
Editor Emeritus

Defying the norm: it is the only way to make change. And one family is doing just that.

Manjari Katju, a Hindu woman, and Aniket Alam, a Muslim man, married despite a national traditional belief that inter-religious marriage should never occur.

"We decided on one thing: there would be no religion in our marriage," Alam said.

Katju comes from a fairly liberal Brahmin (Hindu) family that follows many Western practices.

"But they're very political that marriages should be in the family," she said. "They are very particular about keeping marriage in the community."

So going as far as marrying outside her religion caused some disruptions in Katju's family life. She said her immediate family had few problems with her marriage to Alam.

"My two brothers and parents were very cool about it," she said. "They were very cooperative."

She said it was her aunts, cousins, etc. that had problems.

"But since my parents weren't against it, the rest of the family didn't say anything beyond snide remarks," Katju said.

Although Katju was raised in a fairly liberal family, as a Hindu, she still grew up expecting an arranged marriage. Her relationship with Alam was and is definitely out of the ordinary.

"It was some sort of a bold decision for me," she said.

Alam, by Indian standards, grew up in a liberal family. His parents, Javeed Alam and Jayenti Guha, also married inter-religiously. His father, although culturally Muslim, is an atheist. Alam has followed in his father's footsteps.

"In my memory, I never remember seeing him pray," Alam said about his father. "Consciously, he's a nonbeliever."

Along with being liberal religiously, so is Alam's family politically. His grandfather, Syed Alam, helped found the communist party in India in 1938. Syed allowed his wife to smoke, drink and eat pork. She did not always have to wear a burqua, she cut her hair short and she drove a car. All of these practices go against traditional Muslim beliefs.

"In that sense, he was a very progressive man," Alam said.

As such a "progressive" family, therefore, no one had any problems with Alam's marriage to Katju.

"It was more cross-cultural than cross-religious," Katju said.

The two were introduced to each other in 1991 while attending the University of Delhi.

They met during the time of the Gulf War at a demonstration protesting the United States' involvement in the war.

Through mutual friends and a sharing of political beliefs, Katju and Alam became closer.

They eventually married in December 1996. They were married in court with their parents as witnesses. But the wedding was not as easy as planned.

"We wanted a simple marriage and ended up with four receptions," Alam said.

Thanks to liberal families and strong personal sentiment, Katju and Alam have had few religious difficulties in their marriage. But obstacles have arisen elsewhere.

Katju is two years older than Alam. Typically, the man is older than the woman in Indian relationships.

Because Alam is younger than Katju, she said many people still find their marriage strange.

"Friends and compatriots didn't even understand," she said.

In addition to the age difference, Katju and Alam based their living situation on her career.

Once again, the couple went against Indian standards. Generally, the wife should follow the husband.

After both worked for a short while in Delhi, Katju and Alam relocated.

Katju had applied at the University of Hyderabad, and she got the job in October 2000.

"So I also left," Alam said. "She got a job first, and I stayed at home. To me, it wasn't a big deal. But people do find it awkward."

Alam eventually got a job as a writer for the newspaper, *The Hindu*, in May 2001.

In December 2001, the couple adopted a young girl. They saw her at an orphanage in November when she was about 4 months old.

Although the girl was malnourished and suffered from several ailments, Katju and Alam adopted her.

The couple will raise their daughter with no religion.

"We are very clear on that," Katju said. "There are no two views or debate on that."

They named her Sara Aparajita. Her first name is Persian, for the Hindu religion, and her second name is Sanskrit, for the Muslim faith.

"So she's a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity," Katju said.

Like father and mother, like daughter.

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Sara Aparajita is the granddaughter of Javeed Alam and Jayanth Guha, a couple that was married inter-religiously. Alam and Guha's son, Aniket, is the girl's father.

Family keeps strong bonds

By Allison Rosewicz
Editor Emeritus

The Alams have kept it all in the family. Inter-religious harmony, that is.

Years before their son, Aniket, married a woman of a different faith, Javeed Alam and Jayanti Guha joined across cultural and religious lines. And when they married, times were much tougher for them.

"In spite of all the problems, there is a secular aspect to our country," Guha said. "Otherwise, we wouldn't have been married."

Alam, from Hyderabad, and Guha, from Calcutta, met while studying for their doctorates in Delhi. He is Muslim; she is Hindu.

They married in 1970. In order to have a legal marriage, the parents from both sides had to approve. Both of their fathers attended the court wedding as witnesses.

"My mother was not at all communal-minded," Guha said. "But she would have rather I married a Hindu."

Alam's family had no problems at all.

At the time of the couple's marriage, Alam worked as a lecturer at the Gyan Devi Salwan College in Delhi.

A chairman at the college, a Hindu who had been a victim of communal riots, opposed their marriage and refused to recognize it. He said he needed proof and should have been told of Alam and Guha's engagement prior to their marriage.

"The decision to marry is ours," Alam said. "I do not have to show proof to everyone in the world."

The chairman lost his temper and terminated Alam.

The University of Delhi, which governed all colleges within the city, however, eventually ruled that Gyan Devi Salwan College had to reinstate Alam. But he said he did not want to go back to work for the college because it had treated him so badly.

Alam and Guha experienced not only religious but also political difficulties.

At the time of their marriage, the Jansung party, now known as the BJP, put up posters throughout Delhi accusing Alam of abducting Guha in order to marry her. The posters were written in both Hindi and Urdu (the Muslim language) to reach the faiths of Hinduism and Islam.

"They (members of the Jansung party) caused us a lot of problems," Guha said. "Some of the political parties supported us; some kept quiet. Most of the newspapers supported us."

Other than the propaganda posters, Guha said she faced other written problems.

"I used to get threatening letters that said, 'You divorce him or your parents will be done to death,'" she said.

Alam believes his difficulties had political, not necessarily all religious, roots.

He said he faced prejudice because he is a Marxist and an atheist.

"I don't feel I have experienced discrimination because I am a Muslim, never," he said.

In spite of all their dilemmas, Alam and Guha's marriage has persevered.

"Those who want to create gaps obviously don't want anything that will bridge the gap," Guha said. "I think the problems of the communalism arise because we (the Hindu and Muslim religions) are ignorant of each other. Marriage creates an understanding."

DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

A group of tribal women perform a traditional Hindu dance near Nagarjunasaga.

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

The Charminar is located in the hub of Hyderabad's Old City, where much of the city's Muslim population resides. The Charminar is often called Hyderabad's Eiffel Tower.

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Rich religious history exists in Hyderabad

BY ALLISON ROSEWICZ
Editor Emeritus

Hindu-Muslim conflict has a far-reaching past in India. In the past century, that history has been quite evident in Hyderabad.

The city's population is now only about one-third Muslim, but 70 percent are concentrated in the Old City, where much of Hyderabad's rioting has taken place. The events leading to this population shift, as well as other historical factors, have led to religious, political and economical strife between the Hindu and Muslim communities within the city.

Gooty Venkata Kavitha grew up in the Old City and was 14 years old during the riots in 1990-91 in Hyderabad. She said such violence is the result of misunderstandings between religions.

"It's not a question of who you are," she said. "It's a question of religion."

Today, Hyderabad is enjoying more than a decade-long stint of relative peace, but its communal history will continue to haunt the city.

Hyderabad experienced its worst communal rioting in the winter of 1990-1991. Three periods in the city's 20th century history, beginning in the 1920s, led to this violence.

According to Javeed Alam, professor of political philosophy and social theory at the Central Institution of English and Foreign Languages, not much conflict occurred between Hindus and Muslims during the 19th century.

"They lived side by side; they lived in peace," he said. "But there was no particular warmth between them."

In 1923, Hyderabad saw the first instance of communalized Hindu feelings with the formation of the Aryasmaj Party. The party played upon the discrimination Hindus felt in a Muslim-majority state. Around this same time, Muslim political forces were also developing in India. For example, the Muslim League started organizing during this period, and officially formed in 1935.

The disagreements between such parties wreaked havoc for more than a decade, causing the first riot in 1938 in what is now the Old City of Hyderabad.

Alam called this "a rupture that turned into a long time of confrontation."

The situation worsened in the 1940s. Hyderabad had been under feudal rule for more than 150 years. During the 1940s under Nizam's rule, the Telangana Movement had simultaneously developed against Nizam, promoting the Indian democratic movement.

The Telangana wanted Indian nationalism. Nizam's Razakar army, made up of mostly Muslims, brutally murdered many Hindus of the Telangana. After India's independence in 1947, Nizam eventually lost sovereignty, and the Congress party of the central government forced him to sign into the union.

Before this time, Muslims occupied nearly 80 percent of the jobs in Hyderabad. Following the change in government, there was a huge retrenchment of Muslims by 1949.

Since 1952, when the country's new constitution was written, India's government has implemented reservation — reserving seats in government schools and government jobs for scheduled castes and tribes.

Today, for example, 21 percent of these are reserved for scheduled castes and 7.5 percent for scheduled tribes. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, reservation continued to aid the rise of the Hindu scheduled castes and tribes, and in turn, many Muslims again lost jobs.

As a minority, they were not protected or obliged like the Dalits. Bigotries

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Visitors and worshippers climb the tall flight of stairs leading to the Hindu Birlani Temple.

"It's not a question of who you are, it's a question of religion."

Gooty Vankata Kavitha
Citizen of Hyderabad

against Muslims were also activated. Some Muslims had at one time looked down upon the backward castes that sometimes were servants for Muslims. This caused a sense of animosity from the Dalits, and when they started to mobilize, the tables turned on the Muslims. This again caused dissension between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

"So the communal situation kept worsening in Hyderabad," Alam said.

Also during this time, in 1978, Hyderabad experienced another communal riot. The tension centered on Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's declaration of a national emergency.

In 1975, when Gandhi made this declaration, she basically became the dictator of India. She did this during an economic crisis in which she thought the people were turning against her. The case of this emergency went to court, and Gandhi was imprisoned for a year and a half. She had recently been reelected, but her election to office was declared null and void.

In 1977, elections were held again, and Gandhi lost to a coalition of parties known as the Janata Party, which fought among each other. These events helped cause the riot in 1978.

All of these previous occurrences paved the road for Hyderabad's worst communal riots in the winter of 1990-1991. A combination of these bitter memories, along with India's long history of fighting between Hindus and Muslims, culminated then.

In addition, Hyderabad saw two parties pitted against one another in 1990 and 1991. Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen still had a stronghold in the Old City, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (of the Hindu Right) had won an election for the first time in Secunderabad, Hyderabad's twin city.

Gooty and her family, Hindus, lived across from a Muslim mosque during the riots. She said each day a microphone was used at the mosque to call young Muslim men to attack the local Hindus. On one occasion, her family was a target, but they were rescued.

"They could have killed us; we don't know," she said. "I was so tense with fear."

Their neighbors, who were Muslim, rescued Gooty's family. Gooty said this is an example of the kind of coexistence religions must practice in order for India to become more peaceful.

The criminal element also contributed to the violence. For example, Sardar and Majid Khan, two men who were considered criminals in the Muslim community but were important nonetheless, were murdered in October 1990 and December 1990, respectively, due to communal tensions.

Another factor that makes the riots of 1990 stand out is their difference from previous ones. In the past, a "scoreboard" pattern of killing had been used between Hindus and Muslims — the riots ended when they believed the killings had been balanced.

But in this violence, more than 20 people were brutally murdered each day for more than a week, many of them teenage women. While the killing of Muslims was generally spread out during these riots, about 75 percent of the murdered Hindus were killed on Dec. 8.

Another difference that occurred was the type of Muslim property that was attacked. Homes and shops were once the targets, but larger businesses were destroyed this time around. And new parts of the city, where the Muslim middle class resided, were targeted. This suggests that the lower classes were no longer the sole participants in communal riots — political influence had brought in higher classes as well.

When the military entered during the riots, Gooty said a curfew was imposed. People could only come out of their homes a couple of hours a day. She said this made life even more difficult.

"During the curfew, everyday essentials were more than double price," she said.

These riots left more than 150 dead and more than 300 seriously injured. More were killed in "non-communal" individual arguments and police fire.

Since the end of the worst riots in 1991, Hyderabad has been experiencing a period of relative peace. Not even the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992 or the recent violence in Gujarat could incite large-scale riots in Hyderabad.

Both the Hindu and Muslim communities of the city have come to a general understanding that the fighting has no kind of positive outcome. Both communities are also doing fairly well economically in Hyderabad.

"The generation now isn't like the generation then," Gooty said. "We have a different mindset, different culture, different everything."

As long as Hindus and Muslims continue to coexist and prosper together, Hyderabad has a good chance for continued peace.

"Upward mobilization has created a tacit understanding of not being interested in communal riots," Alam said.

With state and national elections coming up in 2004, however, the city could stand at a crossroads.

If either community falls victim to communal propaganda, this period on nonviolence will be threatened. In order to maintain its peace, Hyderabad cannot forget its history.

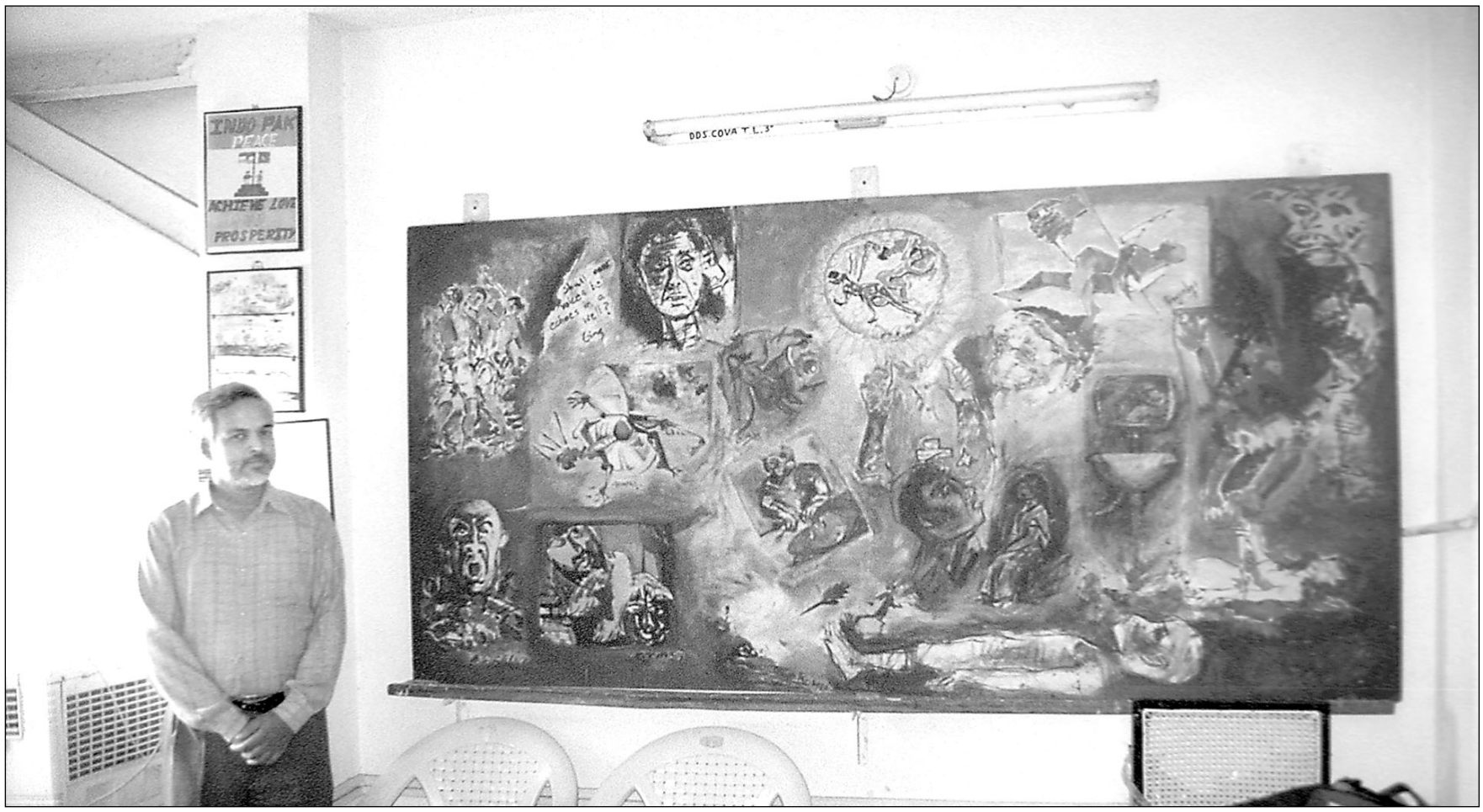
Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Gooty Venkata Kavitha practices a Hindu ritual at a temple near Nagarjunasaga that combines Christianity and Hinduism. Kavitha grew up as a Hindu in the Old City of Hyderabad, which has a largely Muslim population.

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Natives and tourists, including students from Missouri Southern, peruse stores in the large shopping district near the Charminar in Hyderabad's Old City.

Keeping harmony



Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

A group of artists from various religions — including Hinduism, Islam and Christianity – created this painting following Hyderabad's worst religious riots in 1991. The artists wanted to promote religious harmony. The mural hangs in the COVA office.

Volunteers strive for religious peace in communities

BY ALLISON ROSEWICZ
Editor Emeritus

Religious peace begins with a grassroots effort, and one organization in India is building itself with this basis.

The Confederation of Voluntary Associations began doing work in 1991 but did not become an official organization until 1995.

In the aftermath of the worst riots Hyderabad has ever experienced in 1990, several groups joined forces to promote peace between Hindus and Muslims. They went into the individual communities, including slums, to do so.

"We realized just talking about communal harmony is not going to help," said Ali Azghar, executive secretary of COVA. "We need to get in there and address the issues."

The groups visualized long-term efforts, so they eventually formed COVA. Azghar said COVA works across community lines to improve the communal situation.

"This whole communal conflict, the root cause of that was no interaction between the two groups," he said.

To promote communal harmony, individual networks affiliated with COVA work within communities to improve inter-religious relations. Azghar stresses that COVA aims to spread ideology, not its name.

"COVA just does handholding for two to three years, then the organization becomes independent," he said.

"Once these networks become strong and independent, that will be the time for COVA to withdraw itself from the area."

Sixteen networks, two organizations, and one trust currently comprise COVA. COVA believes its strategies have worked in the Old City of Hyderabad, so now it has expanded into 10 districts in the state of Andhra Pradesh, as well as starting networks in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Gujarat. COVA would like to extend its efforts to every state in India and possibly globally.

Other than working within the communities, the networks and organizations of COVA sponsor other activities and events to promote peace, including lectures, seminars, workshops and training programs. COVA organizes programs for children, youth and women.

Programs for children are conducted for those in formal schools and for those who do not attend school.

The Youth Training Resource and Activity Center targets people of ages 16 to 30.

It encourages, among other things, leadership training, community development programs and career advancement programs for youth.

The Women's Program in COVA is organized in two ways: economic empowerment and community development.

COVA does much of its work with Muslim communities but encourages harmony among all religions.

The confederation is in the process of forming a national organization of religious groups that not only includes Hindus and Muslims, but also Sikhs, Christians and others.

"Most religious groups are being appropriated by right wing forces," Azghar said. "Before they lose their secular identity, we're trying to get them in the network."

Coalition commits principles to justification for all people

By Allison Rosewicz
Editor Emeritus

An organization that grew out of the Confederation of Voluntary Association's ideals and is still affiliated with it is the Coalition for Peace and Harmony.

It formed in April 2002 following the violence in Gujarat.

The Coalition's core principle is "belief in and commitment to justice to all, without consideration of caste, creed, or religion and distancing religion from governance."

The organization consists of about 30 members, most of whom are Hindus, but also include Muslims, Christians, Parses and others.

The Coalition targets the middle class who, according to Manatosh Mandal, Secretary General of CPH, is the target of communal propaganda and does not have access to objective information.

"We want to provide them with validated data and objective analysis to enable them to make more informed decisions," Mandal said.

The Coalition has organized a series of lectures on communal issues in order to do this. Some of the topics have included "Minority Rights and Limitations," "Threat from Communalism and the Secular Response," "The Kashmir Issue with Special Reference to the Minorities," "Nature of Violence in Gujarat" and "Hindutva and Women."

Mandal said within the middle class, many prejudices exist about Muslims, and these prejudices contribute to communalism.

"We are looking at these things and trying to remove them," Mandal said.

The Coalition believes increasing social mixing and sponsoring events involving both Hindus and Muslims can relieve communal tension. Some activities the CPH has sponsored include a fast, followed by a peace march and meeting on April 6, 2002, as well as a candlelight procession, to protest the Gujarat killings; organizing relief efforts for the victims in Gujarat; protest meetings against the killing of innocent civilians in Jammu and Kashmir; and protest letters against the oppression of minorities in Bangladesh.

The CPH also recently organized a daylong workshop for teachers and activists called "Promoting National Integration Through Understanding of History."

A group of 150 attended the workshop.

Presently, the Coalition has only a Hyderabad chapter, but it hopes to expand its outreach and network with other organizations in India and abroad to exchange ideas, views, and published material.

Within the next three years, the CPH wants to organize more talks, discussions and workshops with these other groups; publish booklets of these proceedings; and start a newsletter and web site.

"The purpose is to outreach beyond Hyderabad and work in tandem with other organizations so that an all-India movement gets built," Mandal said.

PROMOTING PEACE

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Shabnam Hashmi, a co-founder of Anhad, another organization working for peace among religions in India, speaks to Missouri Southern students at a communal harmony festival in Hyderabad.

Organizations experience backlash of political criticism

Groups press on for peace between religions in face of strong opposition

By Allison Rosewicz
Editor Emeritus

> *"We are for protection of minorities, no matter who they are."*
>
> **Manatosh Mandal**
> *Secretary General of CPH*

It is an ancient principle that peace does not happen without struggle.

Both the Confederation of Voluntary Associations and the Coalition for Peace and Harmony say in general, the public response to their efforts has been positive. But each has also experienced some form of backlash or criticism.

Azghar said COVA faces problems with the right wing political parties, some of which have been violent. He said some COVA officers have had to flee for their lives.

"In the communities we work in, unfortunately the political parties against us have legislative members in the area," said Ali Azghar, Executive Secretary of COVA. "They try to make sure we don't get support."

But, he said, these ploys by the political parties in opposition to COVA usually fail because people at the grassroots level see the positive work COVA performs. He said outsiders, however, are often influenced by the propaganda.

Manatosh Mandal, Secretary General of CPH, said the CPH sometimes gets very harsh letters. For example, when the Coalition helped the victims of Gujarat, the group received many letters questioning why it had not come to the aid of Hindu victims of violence in Kashmir and Bangladesh.

The CPH responded by saying that yes, the Hindus had been oppressed in those areas, but that did not mean the Muslim victims in Gujarat should not be helped. Subsequently, the Coalition organized a lecture about Kashmir.

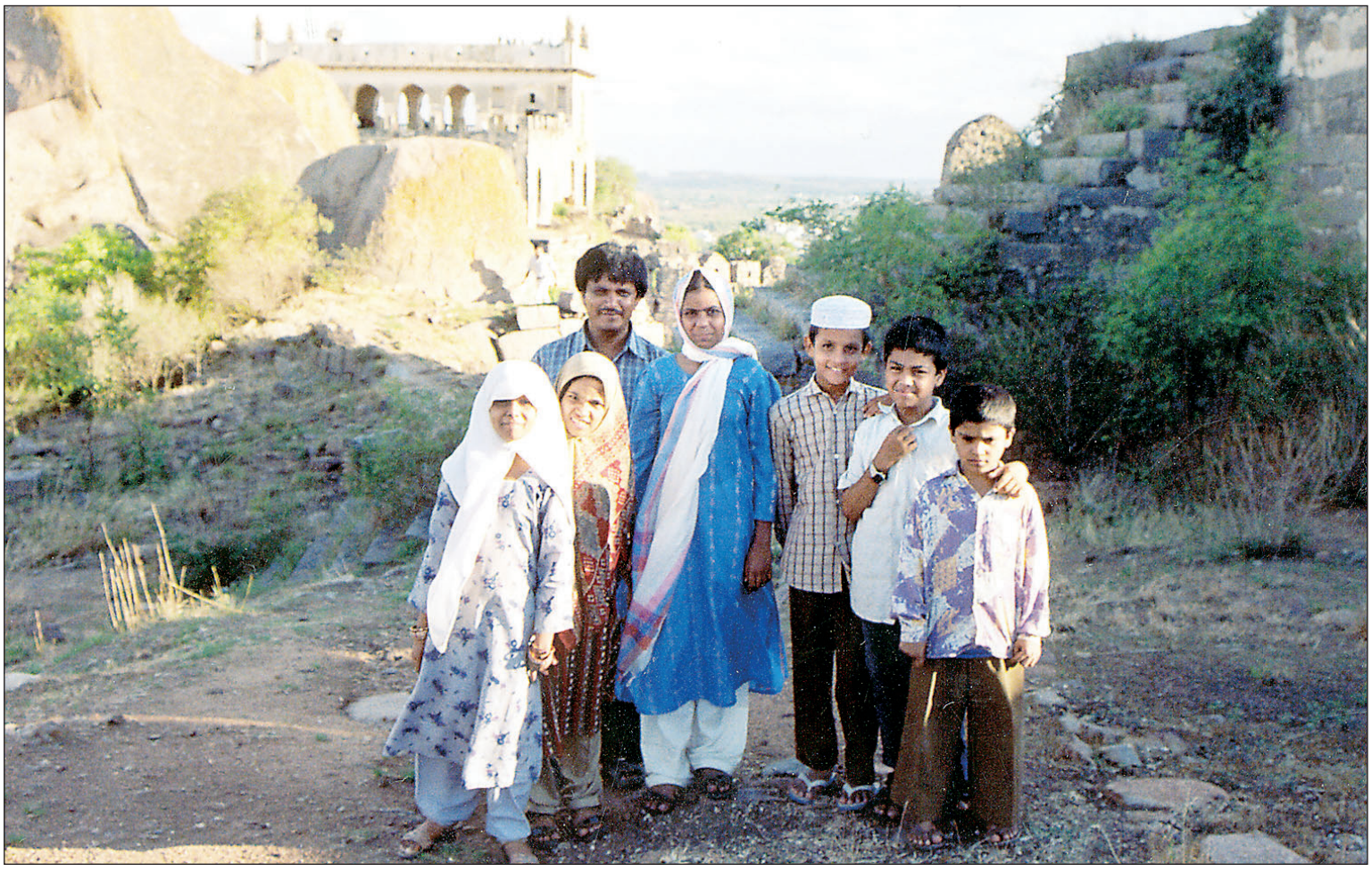
"We are for protection of minorities, no matter who they are," Mandal said.

Despite any hardships COVA or the CPH face, they press on, citing the importance of communal harmony to India's future.

"The essence of India is its plural culture," Mandal said. "Partition of 1947 has not undone it and cannot change this fundamental character of Indian polity. The demographic distribution of population can never allow India to be anything but a plural entity. The option is whether communities will exist peacefully or violently."

Muslim women advance in Indian society

BY ALLISON ROSEWICZ
Editor Emeritus



Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

A Muslim family visits the Golconda Fort, a historical site of the past Muslim rule in Hyderabad. It is becoming more common for Muslim women, as in this family, to venture out into the public.

Throughout the years of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, one group within these two communities has faced oppression like no other.

Without the privilege of choice, Muslim women have been forced to live under the restraint of patriarchal ideals. But in today's Indian society, all women, including Muslims, are making progress. With years of oppressive history behind them, but many obstacles ahead, India's Muslim women are finally attempting to advance up the social ladder.

Muslim women often suffer during communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims. During the riots of 1990-1991 in Hyderabad, for example, Muslim women were victims to some of the worst communal brutality.

Oppression does not only occur through cross-cultural violence. Muslim women also face patriarchal limitations in their way of life, including in how they are expected to dress.

In public and everywhere else but the home, the majority of Muslim women wear the *burqua*. Many women must have all parts of their body, except the eyes, covered. None of their hair should be visible.

Two different viewpoints usually arise in regard to this type of dress: Muslim conservatives say it prevents the women from being sex objects. Others see it as just a way for men to oppress women.

Saquia Tahseen and Irfana Tasneem, Muslim women and students at the University of Hyderabad, both see wearing the *burqua* as a form of security.

Both grew up in families where it was compulsory for women to wear the *burqua*. Although they stress that the Qur'an does not specifically state women have to do so, they feel it makes them safer because they will not receive unwanted attention.

"If you see one girl with the *burqua* and one without, the girl without will have more attention from men," Tasneem said.

Modern society is pushing for Muslim women to receive more rights, but this is difficult because of the Muslim Personal Law.

The MPL, which governs marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, guardianship, custody and adoption for the Muslim community in India, was once varied throughout the country. With the introduction of the Shariat Application Act in 1937, however, the MPL became unified. This dissolved non-Islamic influence in the Muslim community, and women's rights were generally ignored.

After independence, the government made no attempt to reform the MPL. As a Hindu and leader of a secular government, Nehru did not want to impose on the Muslim community or interfere with religion.

Governments after Nehru's also saw interference as a political risk. A window of opportunity for reform did not appear until 1986 with the Shah Bano case. The Supreme Court ruled that Bano should be given monthly payments by her ex-husband.

Under the MPL, Muslim men must give their bride a certain amount of money at marriage but is required to give nothing else later. Orthodox Muslims saw the court's decision as a violation of the MPL, and there was a community outcry.

Parliament, in turn, overturned the decision with the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill. This basically said the Muslim community, not the government, should make decisions such as these.

But this case created precedence. It proved that the MPL took away the democratic, and therefore Indian, ideal of individual choice and discriminated against women.

While this precedence was established, it is still difficult to reform the MPL because the decision for change must come from within the Muslim community itself. Most of the suggested reforms regard women, but many Muslims, even the women, say the MPL should not be changed.

Allison Rosewicz/The Chart

Irfana Tasneem and Saquia Tahseen both come from more liberal Indian Muslim families and are allowed to attend college at the University of Hyderabad.

But outside forces are trying to help Muslim women. Since the early 1990s, women's organizations have been promoting women's rights and gender justice, although

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INTRODUCTION:

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Hindu-Muslim communalism in India is partition, which occurred after India gained its independence from Britain in 1947.

The British had established a "divide and rule" policy in India, meaning the dissension between the Hindu and Muslim communities made British rule necessary. Many Indians thought otherwise, however, and pushed for the freedom they eventually won.

Unfortunately, though, the divide between religions remained.

Along with independence came the partition of the Indian subcontinent into two separate countries - India and Pakistan. Although this split was meant to provide peaceful territory for Muslims, partition actually led to more problems than it solved.

Many Sikhs and Hindus were forced out of the new Pakistani territory into India, and Muslims moved from India to Pakistan. Violence resulted from these migrations, and estimates of deaths during this time range from one to two million.

Partition instigated yet another conflict that continues for India and Pakistan today - the disputed territory of Kashmir. Hindu nationalists in India consider this the "Motherland" of their religion. The Muslims of Pakistan think of Kashmir as an Islamic state, and the militants there are fighting a holy war, or jihad, against the oppression by Indian Hindus.

The dispute over Kashmir has caused two wars between India and Pakistan, and nuclear war over this territory became a possibility between these two nations in 2002, as I previously mentioned.

This is a concise briefing of the major factors that have caused conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India.

Hyderabad is a special example of communalism within the country because of its large Muslim population. India has a Muslim population of 11.5 percent, but in Hyderabad, it increases to 30 percent. Seventy percent of the city's Muslim population is concentrated in Hyderabad's Old City, where much of the city's rioting has occurred.

Throughout this supplement, the history of communal conflict in Hyderabad is provided, as well as information about the city's current communal harmony.

The history of violence between the Hindu and Muslim religions in India is a complex one, and the city of Hyderabad provides a great point of research into this past. The future for both the nation and city could be as equally complex.

But ultimately, the two religions have one choice: conflict or peace.

INSTRUCTOR:

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nomic slowdown. Poverty is still widespread, but the Indian middle class is growing steadily, and now numbers nearly 300 million. Consequently, the consumer market is also growing rapidly and both Indian and Western firms are busy supplying products for this increased demand. Illiteracy is also still a problem, but India's literacy rate has risen steadily from a low of 15 percent at independence in 1947, to nearly 60 percent today. The hostility of India's neighbors, both perceived and real, is a critical problem for the Indian government. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three wars. Another conflict, in 1962, involved India and China. India's experiences with both Pakistan and China have made it build up its military and pursue membership in the so-called "nuclear club" of which both China and Pakistan are also members. Despite all of these solid reasons for understanding India, the view many Americans have of that country is limited largely to the three C's: curry, caste and cows. Most have heard of Gandhi, but few know much about him. What is impressive about what Allison Rosewicz does in this special series of articles for *The Chart* is to make some of the complexity of India understandable. Her experience of India is fresh, firsthand and vital.

She was eager to go to India with me as part of the Southern-in-India program this past summer and to come to terms with what India was all about. That eagerness shows in the articles in this special supplement to *The Chart*.

(Dr. Schmidt was formerly Associate Professor of History and International Studies at Missouri Southern State University).

WOMEN:

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they realize attempting to change a uniform religious code is futile.

Instead, the women's groups look to more attainable goals. The All India Democratic Women's Association, for example, advocates gradual reforms regarding changing laws within individual communities and new laws for property and custody issues.

Additionally, some court decisions have aided Muslim women. The Supreme Court recently decided that a widow and daughter of a deceased coparcener should receive equal rights to property he left behind.

Tahseen and Tasneem, however, believe the MPL should never be amended, because to do so would mean changing the religion since the MPL is based on Islam. They disagree with the organizations pushing for reform.

"I hope Allah might give them the vision to see the religion in a good way," Tahseen said.

Both women also said most Muslim women, especially in poor communities where females are unable to mobilize, submit to their husbands under any circumstance because they are afraid to leave the family.

"A woman will cooperate with the husband no matter what because of the kids," Tasneem said. "She's not secure outside the family."

But both women said because they are educated and have more opportunities, they would not stay with husbands who continued to mistreat them.

Muslim women themselves are also making advancements. In Hyderabad, many women can be seen in public wearing *burquas*. Experts say this is because more Muslim women are coming out of their homes to study and work.

Many Muslims, including women, are gaining ground in education. In 2000, 13 Muslim minority engineering colleges admitted 3,650 students. Through April 2003, 33 of these colleges offered 8,525 positions.

Not only are Muslim women moving up within their community, they are also helping across cultural lines. When the violence in Gujarat threatened the peace in Hyderabad, hundreds of Muslim women joined hands around the Charminar in the Old City, relieving tensions between the police and angry Muslim men. If the women had not done so, communal violence could easily have broken out.

Before the modern movement of Muslim women, they were only allowed to learn about the Qur'an. Tahseen and Tasneem said women have better educational opportunities now because of a shift in attitudes of both the government and families.

"The family which is illiterate and doesn't know the reality of Islam will go that way - no opportunities for education and employment for girls," Tahseen said.

The women think Muslim families are finally beginning to see the value of education.

"If the girl is educated, it leads to development of the whole family and its development in society," Tasneem said.

Tahseen said if a girl was educated, she would be a better educator herself, both morally and scholastically, for generations after her.

"It is a chain," she said. "One generation after another will get better." p

Tahseen and Tasneem both come from families where all the children have been educated.

"There are no restrictions on education and employment in my family," Tahseen said.

She has four sisters who all have their master's degrees, and two brothers who are engineers. Tasneem has seven sisters who are all college graduates. She also has five brothers, two of whom are engineers, and the other three are starting their college educations.

Although Muslim women have a huge history of oppression behind them, some are beginning to see the opportunity to advance. Outside forces, like women's rights groups, are helping this advancement. The Muslim community itself, however, will have to decide if bigger reforms are to take place.

An extra special thanks must be extended to the members of *The Chart* staff – especially Nate Billings, T.J. Gerlach and Andy Tevis – for their help in composing this supplement. Only a former editor can know and understand how hard the staff works!

Novel transcends cultural boundaries

Author discusses current problems in Hinduism while writing her first award-winning fiction

BY ALLISON ROSEWICZ
Editor Emeritus

Before peace can occur between two religions, it must exist within one.

In her novel, *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy eloquently proves the problems that can occur within Hinduism. And the passion with which she wrote this book (her first, and so far, only fiction novel, which won the prestigious Booker Prize) wrenches anyone's heart who reads it, despite caste, creed or religion.

Arundhati Roy
Author

Anytime an author can transcend cultural boundaries with his or her writing, the book becomes a classic. Readers don't only gain an understanding of a contrasting culture through this story. They learn life lessons from it; they love it; they live in it.

Roy tells *The God of Small Things* through flashback. It isn't until the end of the story that each event culminates with the others and the reader learns the truth behind the tragedy.

Estha and Rahel, twin brother and sister, have reunited in Ayemenen, Kerala, after years of separation. When they were eight years old, Estha was sent to live with his father, while Rahel stayed with her aunt, Baby Kochamma, and uncle, Chacko. The twins' mother, Ammu, died a few years after the separation from the desperation of a ruined soul.

The twins were forced apart following the death of Sophie Mol, their cousin who was Chacko's daughter from London. She had drowned in the river near their home. Velutha, the Paravan carpenter, best friend of Estha and Rahel, who serves the twins' grandmother, Mammachi, and lives across the river, brought her limp body home. But Velutha's kindness is not appreciated. As Roy mentions several times, Velutha has to pay the price of history.

The family discovers Velutha, member of a low caste, and Ammu, from a relatively well-off family, are having an affair. Despite friendship since childhood that grows into undeniable love, their relationship is forbidden.

When the family finds out about it, Mammachi is enraged. She spits in Velutha's face and warns him never to come near her home or family again. Meanwhile, Ammu has been locked in her room, helpless to defend her lover.

Later, when Sophie Mol is found dead, Baby Kochamma, a sickeningly bitter woman, takes matters into her own hands. Rather than allow her reputation to be tarnished by Ammu and Velutha's relationship, she chooses to destroy Velutha. She accuses him of kidnapping the three children the night of Sophie Mol's death and tells the police Velutha raped Ammu. As a Paravan, Velutha has no chance.

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS
Arundhati Roy
PICK ANY 2, GET THE CHEAPEST ONE FREE
over 10,000 sold
conditions apply
WINNER OF THE 1997 BOOKER PRIZE

The police arrest and beat him nearly to death. After some brainwashing, Baby Kochamma convinces Estha and Rahel to go along with her story.

Velutha's end is imminent.

After Velutha's death, nothing is the same. The children are separated, and Ammu eventually dies.

Velutha is the god of small things.

Without him, nothing can exist as it did before.

"He left behind a hole in the Universe through which darkness poured like liquid tar. Through which their mother followed without even turning to wave goodbye," Roy writes.

Roy has an incredibly unique, almost poetic, style of creating *The God of Small Things*. She relies on the sound and feeling of individual words. She often uses incomplete and fragmented sentences to make a more emotional impact.

Roy also utilizes many metaphors, including personification, to create the world of this story. Not only is the setting presented in this way, but emotions are also given living qualities, which makes them seem much more real.

Perhaps the most meaningful symbol of the story is the river. Just as Mark Twain used the river to represent life in his stories, so does Roy in this one.

The river of Ayemenen practically raises Estha and Rahel.

It is the means by which they learn their life lessons. It is the threshold between childhood safety and harsh reality, to which their father figure, Velutha, must succumb.

Velutha is the greatest character in this story, possibly in any story.

His name means "white" in Malayalam — "because he was so black." But I think his name represents his purity. He symbolizes the good in humanity. He loves without regard to difference.

Unfortunately, the antagonists outnumber Velutha, so evil defeats him. Although evil seems to prevail in this story and hope for humanity proves nearly hopeless, the bond between Estha and Rahel brings it back in the end.

They are twins but have a "single Siamese soul;" "there was no Each, no Other." Roy creates such a close bond between the twins, even the reader experiences that bond. The reader feels alive through Estha and Rahel.

In this book, Estha and Rahel learn the greatest lessons, and therefore, the reader does also.

That is what makes *The God of Small Things* so enthralling: Roy impacts readers by inviting them inside the story.

Throughout the book, Estha emphasizes his "Two Thoughts: a) Anything can happen and b) It's best to be prepared."

Everyone, characters and readers alike, learn point A is sadly true and that sometimes, you just cannot prepare for the depressing realities of life.

No one can prepare for a sudden event that forces a child to grow up too soon, just as the twins couldn't when they watched the police beat Velutha. But perhaps the harshest lesson the twins learn is that love doesn't always conquer all, that "they had loved a man to death."

After reading this book, I immediately knew it was my new favorite. Never before has a book affected me as this one did.

It caused me to feel every emotion, showed me a new culture, made me learn about life.

Roy herself describes it best within her own story: "The Great Stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. They don't deceive you with thrills and trick endings. They don't surprise you with the unforeseen. They are as familiar as the house you live in. Or the smell of your lover's skin. You know how they end, yet you listen as though you don't. In the way that although you know that one day you will die, you live as though you won't. In the Great Stories you know who lives, who dies, who finds love, who doesn't. And yet you want to know again. That is their mystery and their magic."

The God of Small Things is a phenomenon; Roy is the magician.

I want to know again and again.